

# Hillandale News

No 219 December 1997



# MECHANICAL MUSIC

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# Hillandale News

The Official Journal of The City of London Phonograph and Gramophone Society Limited, Co. Reg. No. 3124250

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**The Society was founded in 1919**

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**Issue Number 219, December 1997**

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**Front cover illustration:** A Christmas Card from HMV  
(Picture by courtesy of the EMI Group)

# EDITOR'S DESK



## Changes

The Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church Halls will be undergoing refurbishment next year and we have had to move the venue of our London Meetings whilst this work is being undertaken. The meetings for the months of February, March, April, May and June will be held in the Wynter Room at the Swedenborg Society, Swedenborg House, 20-21 Bloomsbury Way, London WC1A 2TH.

## Arthur Tracy

One of our American members, Steve Ramm, has informed me that Arthur Tracy (The Street Singer) died in October 1997 aged 98. As many readers will remember he spent many years living and recording in the United Kingdom. When Tracy (born Abbas Trocavutsky) went to America from Russia he settled in Philadelphia. He died in New York.

## December Meeting

This is a members night. Please bring along your favourite record and share it with others along with a bit seasonal fayre. All are welcome.

## January Meeting

Barry Raynaud will present the final part of his talk on *Sound Recording and Reproduction of the 78rpm Era (1927-1960)*. Barry will let us behind the scenes to have a glimpse of the recording engineer's world. All are welcome.

## Seasonal Greetings

On behalf of the Committee may I wish our readers the Compliments of the Season and a prosperous New Year.

Please note that material intended for inclusion in *Hillandale News* must reach the Editor not later than **six weeks before the first day of the month of issue**.

Hence the deadline for the **February 1998** issue will be **15th December 1997**.

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Views expressed in this magazine do not necessarily reflect those of the Editor.

# CRESTED CHINA GRAMOPHONES

## by Cameron Matheson

The Crested China Industry was developed by W. H. Goss, who began his life-long interest in china working in the Copeland china factory at Stoke-on-Trent, and rose through the ranks to the position of Chief Designer.

He left Copeland's to set up his own business in 1858. The late 1880s saw a decline in the normal wares that he produced, but the ever-growing 'tourist trade' of the period provided Goss with an ideal market for his new line of 'Crested China.' Other china factories were quick to copy Goss and produce their own lines of models, and a thriving new industry was soon flourishing.

With the advent of the railways, steamships, and later the automobile, travellers bought – and began collecting – Crested China as mementoes and souvenirs of their visits to towns, sea-side resorts, and popular landmarks.

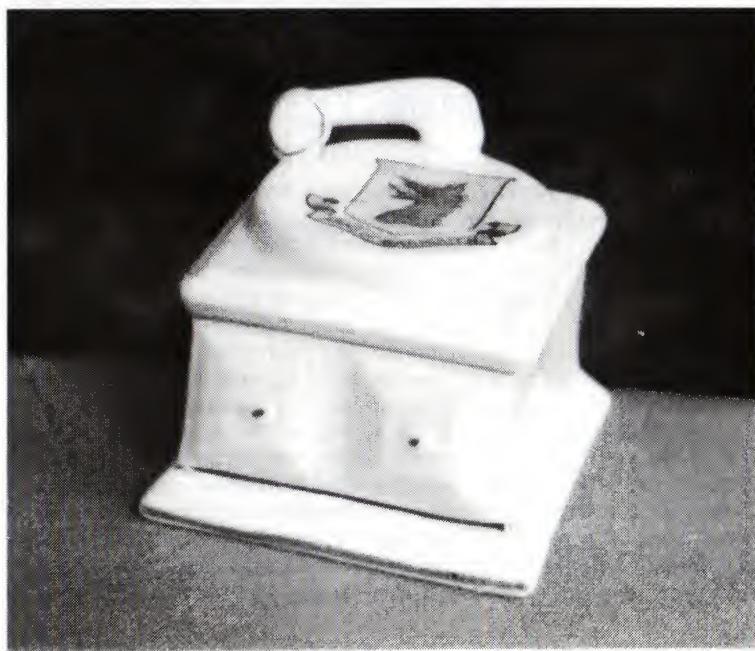
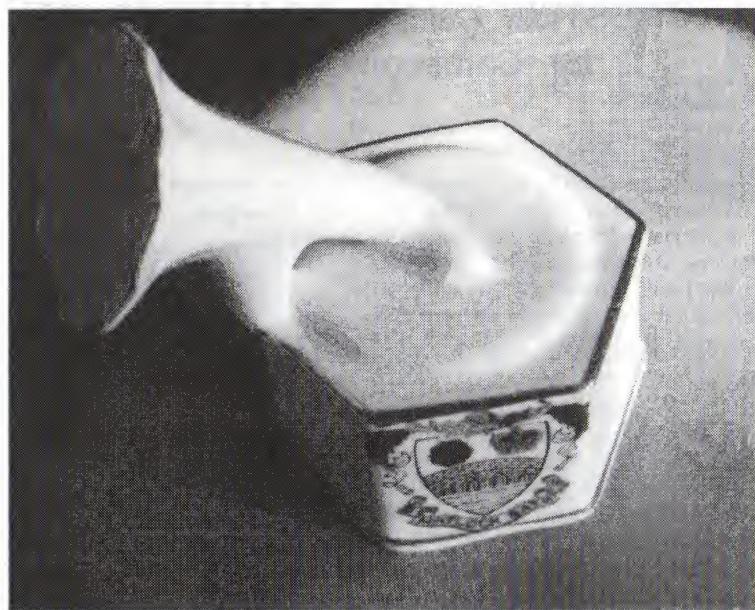
This Commemorative Ware was produced up until just after the First World War, when, due to shortages of manpower and materials resulting from the conflict, production ceased. But while the industry was in full swing, all manner of subjects were produced, and they were often copies of museum pieces, buildings, and monuments. New inventions for the home were also a source of inspiration, and the new wonder of the age, a machine that could reproduce the human voice and all manner of sounds, 'The Gramophone,' was assiduously portrayed. The china modellers had a variety of different machines to copy. The positioning of the town crest or heraldic device on the irregular-shaped gramophone models was a

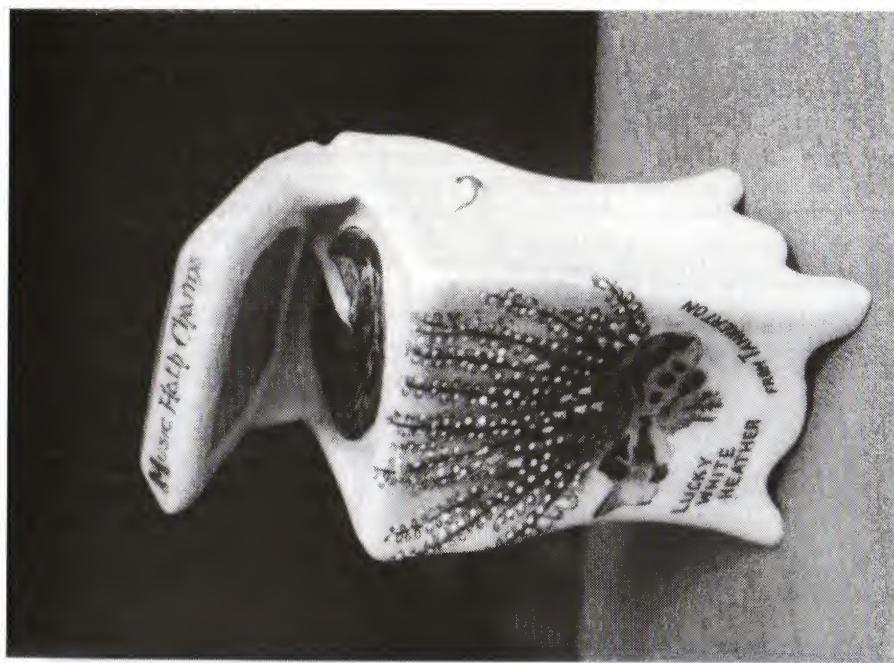
problem, because it needed to be seen from different angles.

The horn gramophone was the most popular model produced. Although different manufacturers produced their own versions of it, they all look very much alike, and it is difficult to ascertain which machine was copied by the modeller. But sizes of the models varied from each manufacturer, and so the uniformity of the models, in any display, is not immediately apparent. The largest has the sound-box well defined with an out-of-proportion needle visible. The rear support bracket for the horn is pierced and shaped, and this adds a certain elegance to the appearance.

The hornless table model appears in two versions: one, with the tone arm at the centre of the turntable in playing 'finish' position; and the other with the tone arm on the rim of the turntable. As with the horn model, a composite design makes it difficult to attribute machine models.

Incorporated within the subject of gramophones is an unusual and original design based on the HMV Trade Mark. To avoid infringement of design, the model was carefully and subtly changed. 'Nipper' has a black patch around one eye and listens to the horn with head to one side and ear cocked. He also has a more animated posture than seen in the Trade Mark, where Nipper has a somewhat static expression. Just to confirm what has already been assumed about what inspired the model, a musical notation on a five-line staff with the words "His Master's Voice" is printed on the back. Next to this, to add further proof, is an outline sketch of the original Nipper.





The console model, with its graceful curves and stylish design, is vaguely based on a 'Louis XV 'Victrola' model of 1909. The horn grill is concealed by the sprig of Good Luck heather, and is not seen in the photograph. *Music Hath Charms* from William Congreve's *The Mourning Bride*, printed on the raised lid, does not convey that the charms are "to soothe a savage breast," due to the lack of space for the full quote. Operational authenticity by the modeller can be appreciated by the tone arm which is at the end of the record, for the lid would be in that raised position for a change of recording.

To increase sales and encourage visitors to add to their collections, the manufacturers produced many variations of each article. The unusual hexagonal-shaped base of the horn model would have been modelled on a machine that was available at the time. This is not a finely detailed piece, but it has an attractive fluted edge.

Gramophone models can be obtained in antique shops, fairs, and by mail-order from specialist dealers. What is somewhat surprising is the non-existence of phonograph models. The height of the crested china industry coincided with the development and production of the phonograph. Dealers' catalogues and reference books on the subject fail to produce illustrations or entries. Manufacturers' catalogues did not list all the models they produced, so it is possible that a phonograph may still turn up.

The Crested China Company of Driffield, Yorkshire and Goss and Crested China Ltd. of Waterlooville, Hants, have large stocks of crested china. Their catalogues invariably feature the more popular models of gramophones, and are available on approval.



# WORLD RECORD LTD. AND PEMBERTON BILLING'S OTHER VENTURES (Part 2)

## by Frank Andrews

### Fetherflex Records

The similarity in design and colours of the Fetherflex Record label to that of the later Piccadilly Record label caused many people to assume that there was a connection between the two. This has been found not to have been the case although the same commercial artist may have produced both labels as there are similar instruments depicted on the outer edge of both labels. The fact that the patent for flexible discs came from a Piccadilly address has no bearing on the case.

{Here we played Fetherflex Record 66 from a tape recording provided by Arthur Badrock of Norwich. The piece of music was *Faust Fantasia* with The Cavendish Band (matrix F129).}

### Australian Developments

In Brighton, Melbourne, Victoria a Mr Alexander Knapp formed a business called Controlaphone Limited, which was to distribute the imported discs and speed controllers of World Record Ltd. of London, from about June 1923.

In October 1923 Billing went out to Australia, accompanied by his wife, who was suffering from leukaemia and was hoping for a remission in her illness in Australia's healthier environment. Billing had two sisters living in Australia and a nephew, who had become an aviator. Sadly Mrs Pember-ton Billing died on November 29th.

Billing remained in Melbourne where he organised the first record manufacturing factory in Australia at Bay Street, Brighton, on land which he had bought. By early 1924

he was back at The Cromwell Works, Mortlake, supervising the shipping out of recording machines, plant and some personnel in order to establish flexible, unbreakable records at the Bay Street factory.

Whilst in London, in April 1924, he applied for a patent for a device for a gramophone which could play records in conjunction with a picture slide projector. Later on May 19th, he applied for a patent for a new method of making unbreakable flexible records either on single sheets or bonded sheets of paper. This was the very month in which it was reported that the Featherweight Flexible Record Company had put itself into voluntary liquidation. It would therefore, have been highly unlikely that the new process was utilised to produce the last of the Fetherflex discs. No more than 70 F-prefixed catalogue series discs are known to have been issued during the short period they were on sale.

A new catalogue of 102 pages was published by World Record Ltd. in July 1924 with the longest playing time of one side then given as 13 minutes. The prices of World Record Controllers were also at reduced prices (standard model down from 39s. 6d. to 19s. 6d and the De Luxe model down from 59s. 6d. to 39s 6d.).

By this time Billing was either back in Australia or on his way back to this country. The recording facilities were installed in the Brighton factory and Henry Goody was sent out from the Cromwell Works to be the supervisor for the disc recording to be produced in Australia.

PRESS  
EXTRACTS

From the well-known trade journal, "The Sound Wave"—"Twenty minute Record—the new world record for a record of this length—was a most remarkable moment in the history of the gramophone—its value cannot be overestimated."

From "The Talking Machine World"—"The most revolutionary invention since the inception of the science of soundrecording."

## WORLD RECORDS

"The Record with the Silent Surface"

Long duration Re-  
cords, that play 3 to  
5 times longer than  
ordinary records of  
equal size.

World Records play  
at 78 Revolutions  
per minute, and  
with the aid of our  
new Carriage attachment.

### THE CENTURY'S Greatest Musical Sensation

WILL PLAY ON ANY GRAMOPHONE OR DISC RECORD PHONOGRAPH

**MARY, OBJECT!**— The outstanding feature of this invention is that it produces three to five times more music from a 12-inch World Record than is contained on any other 12-inch record.

**MUSICAL and VOCAL ITEMS RENDERED WITHOUT ABBREVIATION**

tion of Blare on Big Notes. Also  
tion of surface noises known as  
"scratching."

An immense Boom to Dances. A  
Waltz, One Step, Fox Trot, all on  
one side of a double sided 78 World  
Record.

World Records give more music for  
a less price, save needles, wear  
and tear on maters, and themselves wear  
six times longer.



### ING THE TROLLEY.

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ge through the  
country pur-  
we provide a  
trolley which  
following  
made instruc-  
child can attach  
trolley to the

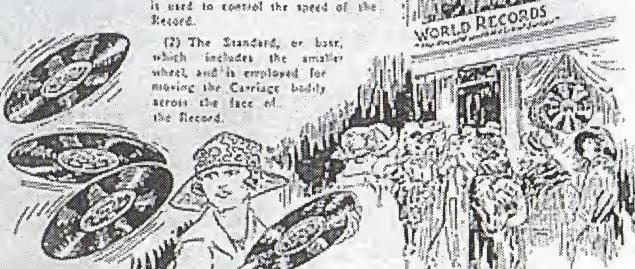
**ICE OF  
TROLLEY.**  
Model. 12/17/-  
del. ... 12/16/-

**ICE OF  
CORDS.**  
Model. 12/-  
th contains ap-  
tely 6 minutes  
time each side  
22/- per 12 inch  
128/- Each  
approximately  
minutes play  
each side.

WORLD RECORDS are played by placing a small attachment by the side of the turntable of any ordinary Gramophone or Phonograph, and this attachment so controls the speed of the turntable (ALLOWING IT TO INCREASE GRADUALLY AS THE NEEDLE PLAYS TO THE CENTER), as to cause it to run the same number of revolutions over a much longer time. The Controller is a perfectly constructed piece of mechanism with a Pickering type of carriage, consisting of two chief parts—

(1) The Carriage, which includes the larger rubber tyred wheel, and is used to control the speed of the Record.

(2) The Standard, or base, which includes the smaller wheel, and is employed for moving the Carriage bodily across the face of the Record.



**WORLD RECORD (Australia) PTY. LTD.**  
211 ELIZABETH ST. (Opp. G.P.O.), MELBOURNE

COMPLETE  
CATALOGUE ON  
APPLICATION

With the World Record trade mark registered and an Australian patent applied for Billing's flexible unbreakable record process, Knapp's business was reorganised as World Record (Australia) Proprietary Ltd.

### The end of Fetherflex and World Records

In October 1924 at the beginning of the 1924/25 season World Record Ltd. announced that it was to change its intermittent record issuing policy to a regular monthly supplement. At the same time it advertised that Schubert's *Unfinished Symphony* was available complete on one disc (with the first movement taking 12 minutes and the second movement 11 minutes).

With another complete catalogue published in October 1924, one trade periodical noted that Robert Carr (baritone) was available singing all four of Amy Woodforde-Finden's *Indian Love Lyrics* on one side of World Record 207 and on the other side he was singing five of Charles Willerby's *Bow Bells* song cycle. It also noted that there was a complete recording of Mozart's *String Quartet No.18* (Peter's Edition) K499 on three sides (playing time 32 minutes 30 seconds. This was played by the Leo Abkov String Quartette.

The World Record was now approaching its demise. There was probably a November list and possibly a December supplement. Earlier, in July, another £3,000 had been raised via the £10,000 mortgage debenture created in January 1923.

Earlier still, in May, The Featherweight Flexible Record Co. Ltd. was compelled to put itself into voluntary liquidation, so that was possibly the last month in which any new Fetherflex recordings became available. There had been little mention of the discs until an article, written by a Mr Palmer, was published. This read "Who has heard of the Featherweight Flexible Record? A

record made of a sort of canvas impregnated with a shellac composition, which will bend, may be dropped with impunity, is as light as cardboard and costs only one shilling and threepence for a double-sided 10 inch, and will play music. It is a fact, but, it is another of those facts that are concealed from the inquisitive public, that when the first Fetherflexes were published they were quite impossible, the coarse texture of the canvas rendered them so noisy that even the brass in an orchestra was inaudible. The blasting was frightful. Acting upon expert advice the manufacturer set to work and turned out an improved make which, it is quite possible, is a little, if any, more scratchy most half-crown makes and is splendid for outdoors and party work. They have not yet succeeded in making them to suit the fastidious user but, if the makers will go again for advice, they may hope for better things."

Although in liquidation at this juncture, the company's name and address in 3-4 Princes St. was still being advertised in 1925. The company's files were destroyed by the Denning Committee after the Second World War.

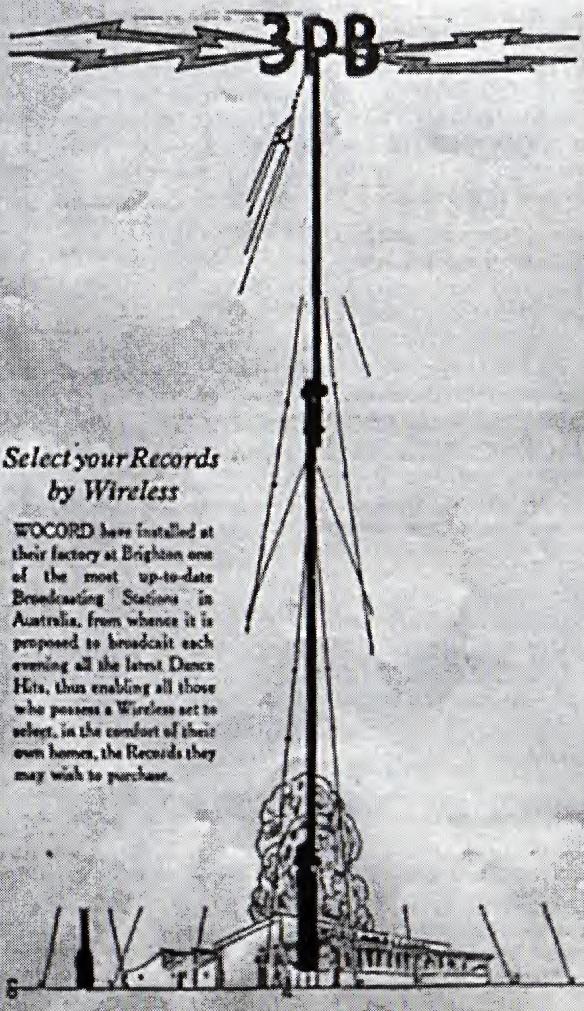
{The reverse side of Fetherflex 66 was played from a tape dubbing. A *Fantasia* from Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* was performed by the Cavendish Band (matrix F130). The Cavendish Band was a 'house' combination.}

In Australia, in November 1924, a patent was granted for flexible unbreakable record making and trademark registration was applied for in respect of record labels Austral and Condor.

The creditors of Featherweight Flexible Record Co. Ltd. heard its liquidator state that the only assets of the company were its patent rights in the record-making process. These had a nominal value of £5,160 13s. 6d., but were actually valueless. He observed that the first 200,000 discs which had been made had been scrapped as they

#### WORLD RECORDS BROADCASTING STATION

Apart from establishing the studio and record manufacturing plant, World Record broadcast programmes featuring their products, as well as the local artists they were recording. The decision to add a radio transmitter to the Brighton factory was prompted by the closure of Melbourne's only "B" class commercial radio station owing to financial problems. The group behind World Record (Australia) Pty. Ltd. decided that this opening provided an opportunity to promote their records by broadcasting them.



#### *Select your Records by Wireless*

WOCORD have installed at their factory at Brighton one of the most up-to-date Broadcasting Stations in Australia, from whence it is proposed to broadcast each evening all the latest Dance Hits, thus enabling all those who possess a Wireless set to select, in the comfort of their own homes, the Records they may wish to purchase.

were quite unsatisfactory, and since then all stock had been sold off, prior to going into liquidation, in order to raise money to pay wages and expenses. The four directors had received nothing whatsoever from the business, but about £2,719 had been paid out in salaries and for services rendered, but with the four directors acting without salaries. Each had put in £750 towards the £3,000 paid to World Record Ltd. for the patent rights in the record manufacturing process.

December 31st 1924 meant the end of the World Record label, for in January 1925, the newly formed Vocalion Gramophone Co. Ltd. was founded upon the acquisition of all the patents regarding the World Record Speed Controller and the constant-linear-speed method of recording. Along with those, Vocalion acquired the Aeolian Co. Ltd.'s business in Vocalion Gramophones and the production of the Aeolian Vocalion Records, Aco records and the Universal Music Co. Ltd.'s factory at Hayes, Middlesex, where those records were manufactured along with other labelled discs under contracts with the Aeolian Company.

Without its gramophone and record business, World Record Co. Ltd. continued its corporate existence. It had received 130,000 10s. 0d. shares in the new Vocalion company in payment for its former business.

Vocalion announced that the constant-linear-speed records would still be produced but under the new style of Vocalion Four-In-One Records as the discs were capable of containing four full titles per disc. It has not been discovered if any such labelled discs were ever produced. It is, however, known that the Vocalion Long Playing Record was produced by the factory and delivered for sale.

## The Vocalion Long Playing Record

A complete catalogue of the constant linear speed records discs was published in May 1925.

{At this point *Danse de Mirlitons* from Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Suite* performed by the Band of H.M. Welsh Guards under Andrew Harris was played. The catalogue number was W39 and the matrix BC36.}

Out in Australia, in January 1925, more labels were being registered for trade marks. Such labels were Wendy (pressed in England by Vocalion as Little Marvel), Wafer, and Wocord.

In August, when Austral records became available as 10" flexibles, they comprised mostly recordings from the Emerson catalogue of America (Emersons had been used to make up dance music records on World Records at Mortlake). The Austral Duplex Records were 8" in diameter. They were issued either in late 1924 or early 1925 and were the first to feature Australian artists. Facilities were available at Bay Street for private recordings.

Also in August, Billing established a radio broadcasting station in the Brighton recording studio. His station had the call-sign 3PB and had only a weak signal.

{A picture was screened showing a microphone hanging down in front of the recording horn. Another picture showing the radio mast of 3PB followed.}

Around this time World Record (Australia) Pty., Ltd. of 211 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne, was put into liquidation so that the business could be reformed under the name of Wocord Limited. Wocord had already been printed on the Australian labels.

Condor Records, made of hard-core and shellac, began to appear. They were recorded in the last quarter of 1925, but the business was in poor shape. The output was never large, and was hindered by old-fashioned manual presses, the susceptibility of the records to damage and the failure of the flexible records to give satis-

factory results. Columbia and The Gramophone Co. Ltd. began issuing electrical recordings in 1925. This resulted in Billing inviting Charles H. Gendle to come out to Australia to attempt some expansion of his business (possibly with the co-operation of Vocalion in England).

Gendle had worked at Mortlake, but was currently the general manager with Vocalion at the Hayes factory and responsible for the Vocalion Long Playing Records, some of which had been distributed by World Record (Australia) and some of which could have been re-labelled Wocord. Some local pressing was undertaken, which may have been experimental. Some World Records had been pressed by the Australian company if one can believe the labels. Gendle was not impressed with what he found at Bay Street, Brighton and returned to England, with Billing, via America, where they wished to investigate the new electrical recording methods. Upon his return, Gendle was instrumental in persuading Vocalion to erect a much larger factory in Melbourne for its own purposes.

In early 1926, 3PB was closed down. Its efforts to advertise and increase sales of Wocord Limited's records did not have much impact and its potential audience was too small.

{An extract from Vocalion Long Playing Record W30 (matrix BC518) was played. The Band of H.M. Life Guards under Lt. H. Eldridge played a selection from Sullivan's *Mikado*.}

In 1925, World Record Ltd. moved its registered office from Cromwell Works to 83 Above Bar, Southampton, Hants. Any further connection of Pemberton Billing with that company remained unknown until January 30th 1934 when the company was struck from Companies House register.

### The Duophone Unbreakable Record

Billing, in November 1925, had applied for three Letters Patent, two of which related to the manufacture of unbreakable records, on paper bases, using what was described as a "burnt off" method in coating the surfaces. The third application was for a linear-speed controller being an integral part of a motor for a gramophone or recording machine. Billing's address was then at Mitcham's Yard, Ferry Works, Twickenham, Middlesex.

In June 1926, The Duophone and Unbreakable Record Co. Ltd. was founded. It took over the business in solid stock records and gramophones of The Duophone Syndicate Ltd. and, at the same time, acquired an interest and rights in Billing's patents for unbreakable discs. The factory in Browells Lane, Feltham, Middlesex, valued at £2,657, including all the plant, was also acquired.

The new Duophone Unbreakable Records were put on sale in November 1926, which was the same month in which the new company and Billing applied for yet another patent relating to the production of paper or cardboard based unbreakable records. The address given by both was the Factory in Browells Lane.

{An extract a selection from the Savoy Opera *Princess Ida* from a recording by Mackenzie Rogan's Band on a Duophone Unbreakable Record was played.}

In 1927, Billing, while still at the Feltham factory, applied for a patent for the packaging of unbreakable records. This packaging would consist of sleeves of either a round or square shape with stitching and other unique features.

{An example of a round sleeve was shown.}

Billing had also ventured into another realm, that of a motorised caravan or dormitory, which *The Autocar*, in 1928, described as a "Land Yacht". An example screened revealed it to contain a gramophone, a shower, an electric radiator and other interesting objects.

A memory of a Mr Cox of those days, an ex-employee of Billing, was that he worked alongside Billing in the Feltham factory on the presses. Billing was often to be found in a dressing gown, over pyjamas, and carpet slippers, working one press whilst he (Cox) worked the other! This would suggest that Billing lived on the premises.

The "burnt off" method of making records patent was assigned to the new Duophone (Foreign) Co. Ltd. on July 13th 1928 by the Duophone and Unbreakable Record Company, which itself had recently acquired a large and extensive factory in Southall, Middlesex, and had taken over the Rapson Tyre Woks factory at New Malden, Surrey. The Duophone and Unbreakable Record Company had recently fused its commercial interests with those of British Brunswick Ltd. British Brunswick was having its records pressed at the Tyre Works at the time the new Decca Record Co. Ltd. acquired the factory in 1929.

On July 21st 1928 another company was founded. The American and Dominions Unbreakable Record Co. Ltd., which acquired the American, Canadian, Australian and New Zealand patents with records to be supplied by the Feltham, Southall and New Malden factories, or one or more of same. W. H. White of World Record Co. Ltd. and that company were involved, £36,666 13s. 4d. being paid in cash for rights obtained. White also received 50,000 fully paid one shilling shares.

Under a contract of February 11th 1928 Billing was to receive a halfpenny royalty on all discs produced and sold. White resigned as a director of the company in 1930. There we leave what is now the history of the Duophone companies.

### **Pemberton Billing - an MP again?**

In the Spring of 1929 Billing put himself forward again as the potential Member of

Parliament for the East Hertfordshire constituency. He privately made recordings of the *Election Song* with the Columbia Graphophone Co. Ltd. on April 24th 1929 (Record PB 1) and an election speech *Send the Man Who Woke Them Up to Wake Them Up Again* - a reference to his activities in World War I.

Billing's election bid failed and shortly afterwards he went to the U.S.A., driving right across the states to California, and it was not until 1934 that he is heard of again in England. There he continued his interest in aircraft. He designed an autogyro and a light aeroplane, which he named the *Sky-lark*. This could be built for £100.

It was in 1935 when he again began to submit ideas for inventions to the Patent Office. There were nine relating to cameras in 1935 and another five in 1936, plus one for an aircraft invention. 1937 saw six camera appliances. This was the year he re-married.

{A picture of a Billing camera was shown.}

In 1938 Billing took on the management of a cinema (the famous Court Theatre in Sloane Square, London). He held this post until 1939 when he applied for five more patents - two connected with cameras, two relating to marine craft and one for an internal combustion engine.

### **The Last Constant Linear Speed Records before Compact Discs?**

Taking the maiden flight of a flying boat, Billing went to America and on reaching California it is understood that his constant-linear-speed inventions were taken up by the newly formed Cinematone Corporation of Hollywood, whose products were to be the Penny Phono records and Juke Boxes. The latter was the invention of a Mr W. Falkenberg, who was well known in the coin-feed mechanisms circle.



*Penny Phone  
AND PENNY PHONO RECORDS  
are taking the Country  
by Storm!*

**CINEMATONE  
CORPORATION**

Information gladly supplied to interested operators, distributors and jobbers on request.

1107 N. HIGHLAND AVE. • HOLLYWOOD, CALIF.

The Juke Box was compact, standing just 42 inches high and weighing only 11 stone. It had few moving parts. It held just one twelve-inch, single-sided, constant-linear-speed disc. The starting speed was approximately 20rpm and the finishing speed around 70rpm. Each disc issued had ten titles per side. For one cent the listener could hear one selection from the ten titles.

The company's address was at 1107 North Highland Avenue. Its own recording studio was in Gordon Street, Hollywood. Artists were drawn from local night clubs, moving picture companies' studios and radio stations. From the latter came Lindley Armstrong Jones with his Novelty Band (Later to become Spike Jones and His City Slickers). Jones organised a six-piece Cinematone ensemble which was named either the Penny-Funnies or the Cinema-Fritters. He had recorded with his own band on May 29th 1939 for the demonstration. Penny Phono discs which contained five titles were delivered free with the Juke Boxes.

Jones was appointed Musical Director for the Cinematone Corporation and he also engaged much of the talent, which included such celebrities as Gus Arnheim, The King Sisters, The Nat King Cole Trio and John Costalis' Band among others.

By September 1939 82 titles had been recorded and a working schedule called for another 15 titles per week, for discs were supplied weekly to the Juke Box owners. Each disc contained one up-to-date "Tune of the Week" title and nine other familiar tunes of various vintages. The last issues of Penny Phono Records were in early 1940 when Spike Jones resigned from the business.

## Billing, the Second World War and his death

During 1939 Billing sought for a patent relating to a mobile folding structure and at the time war was declared, in September, he was already designing new types of aircraft, one of which was a "Slipstream" fighter aeroplane comprising two planes where one slipped off to give further flying distances from base.

His final patent applications were submitted in 1940. One was for a hospital stretcher, another for a device to locate vehicles and another for packaging razor blades and lastly one for a propelling device for marine vessels.

He had two books published in 1940, *Defence against the Night Bomber* and *The Aeroplane of Tomorrow*. A novel *High Treason* had been made into Gaumont's first all-talking film in 1929.

He made more unsuccessful attempts to enter The House of Commons during the war years and he led a life of varied interests after the war. Pemberton Billing died at the age of 68 on 11th November 1948 at Burnham-on-Crouch in Essex, not far from where he started his initial venture into flying machines.

## The End

**WOCORD**

All Wocord Products are fully protected by patents.



Controller for World Record

# YOU ARE AN ACCESSORY!

## By Dave Cooper

### 5: The BCN Needle Sharpener

I had both **this** thorn needle sharpener and the IM Pointmaster in my collection for several months before considering their use. I had, as previously mentioned in this series, tried unsuccessfully to get fibre needles to play a full side of a 10-inch record.

This little device (there are modern day replicas still being made) is well known to 78 collectors. The instructions are pretty clear. It is a pretty laborious task of course to re-sharpen a needle after every play. However, sometimes a needle may last longer where a record is in good condition. Reproduction is more mellow and the wooden point will not wear a record as steel needles do. The rubber wheel on my sharpener had perished but a good dealer friend as usual found me a replacement and it now works perfectly.

Mine is in a box (see the illustrations from the instructions on the side of the box) and cost £25 in 1995. The emery rings of course wear out. There were twelve replacement rings in a brown envelope in the bottom of the box marked one shilling (1/-). Several hundred thorn needles also came with this item in three grades. These will last years as each is re-pointable many times. To buy new at about £5 for six, the needles alone are worth far more than I paid for the sharpener! This is a very good addition for the 78 collector who likes to play his collection on a gramophone.

Next Time: Gramophone Record Dusters

### CLPGS. BOOKLIST - LATEST ADDITIONS

**Cat No. BD 36** *Edison Blue Amberol Recordings 1912 to 1914* by Ronald Dethlefsen. Coloured soft cover, 206 pp. Numerical list of records, many reproduced insert slips, alphabetical list of artists with monochrome illustrations. **Price £25 plus postage.**

#### Postage

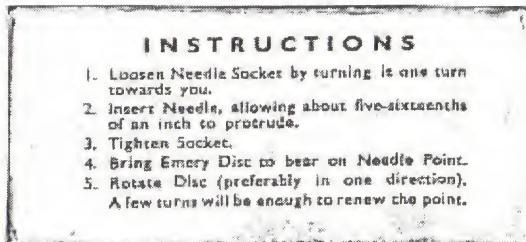
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Fax & Tel: [REDACTED]; e-mail: clpgsbook@aol.com



1. Loosen Needle Socket by turning it one turn towards you.
2. Insert Needle, allowing about five-sixteenths of an inch to protrude.
3. Tighten Socket.
4. Bring Emery Disc to bear on Needle Point.
5. Rotate Disc (preferably in one direction). A few turns will be enough to renew the point.

## UNDER THE CARPETS

### by Michael Hegarty

"We found some old newspapers and there were some gramophones in the advertisements", said my niece recently, and some time later a large plastic bag containing newspapers and magazines dating from the turn of the century to the 1930s came here for inspection. Having rested under the upstairs carpets in an old farmhouse they were in very good condition and in a way provided an excellent record of what one could spend money on in those days.

The Christmas 1904 number of *The Weekly Irish Times* carried a full-page advert for The Gramophone and Typewriter Ltd. The morning glory horn had not appeared by the end of 1904 on any of the machines they offered and they claimed a catalogue of 12,000 records. Fifteen pounds bought a fine machine on a pedestal and for comparison, West and Son, Dublin Silversmiths with a special royal warrant to the King, sold a solid silver sugar bowl at £1. 5s. 0d. in the same 1904 issue. A small weekly magazine *The Marvel* in issue No.55 (the date was torn off) advertised two phonographs, one of which the editor had arranged to supply his readers, a first class machine at 7/6d.

*Ireland's Own* still sells very well today as it did in 1925 when it carried Kearney Brothers "the biggest gramophone dealers in Ireland" advertisement for Leo Rowesome's bagpipe records. Searching through my own collection I find that Rowesome recorded for Broadcast, Columbia, Decca, HMV, Rex and Sterno. The ones advertised in *Ireland's Own* were Winners.

By Christmas 1927 the *Irish Weekly Independent* advised its readers that "The Gramophone House" could supply any model of machine at 2/6d per week - no

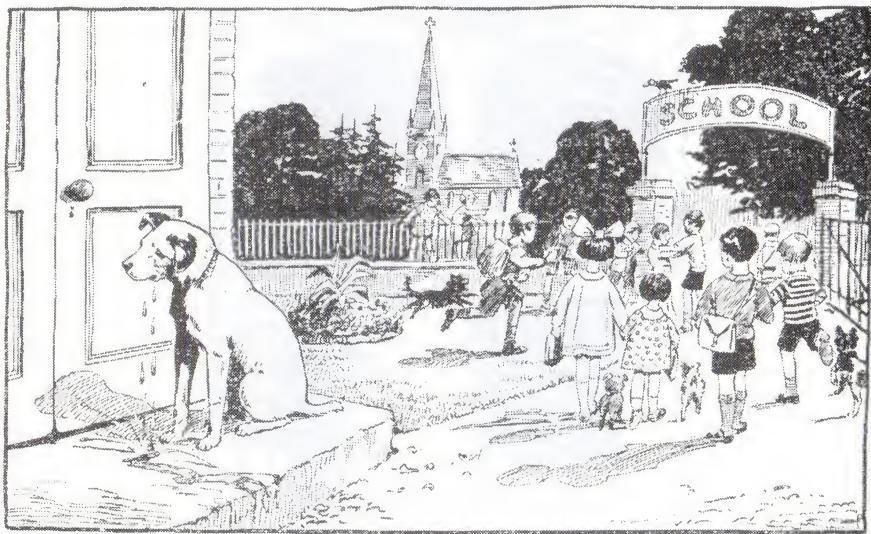
mention of APR in those days. The same issue carried the special Christmas offer from "The O'Hanrahans" "Twelve Irish Songs by John McCormack". What they did not say was that these were in fact 10¾" Regal records taken from Old Odeon masters, which were well out of date, 20 years in fact and very pre-electric.

A religious magazine *The Far East* had poor Nipper, who still looks himself, but in tears this time, poor fellow!

McHugh's Service Store in Dublin's Talbot Street offered Columbia gramophones and records for Christmas 1932 when double-breasted suits cost 50/-, breakfast in the best hotel in Dublin was 3/-, or a new Vauxhall Cadet motor car cost £345 ex Works plus £10 duty.

St.Patrick's Day 1933 issue of *The Irish Independent* offered fine value with big reductions in HMV machine prices. The Model 130 was reduced to £7. 5s. 0d. and the Popular Table Grand for the small home and critical taste was reduced to £6. 0s. 0d., which was the same price as a 3-foot oak bedroom suite from Boyer and Co. The Gramophone Stores spent plenty of money advertising Columbia and HMV products.

Finally we come to Christmas 1936. *The Independent* proclaimed that one should spend Christmas at McHugh's, where one could buy "Fogarty's Christmas Cake" - Flanagan Brothers' recipe. *Serenade in the Night* with The Street Singer was available for 1/10d. One could also go home with a 12" HMV of McCormack singing *Adeste Fideles*, but then the same issue in its situation vacant columns advertised: "Wanted, man handy with horses, live in at £20 per year."



## HIS MASTER'S VOICE

Column is pained to learn that in certain remote parts of the interior the heartless practice still survives of keeping little boys in after school. There is only one conclusion: the officials of the S.P.C.A. (The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Dumb Animals) are fast asleep. Let us hope they wake up one of these years.

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"Marta" (M'apperi tutt' em'ork.  
Enrico Caruso. DB1802 7/-  
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An EMG Mk. 10 'Oversize' Gramophone, English,  
*circa* 1947. Sold on 3rd March 1994 for £5,500.

# MECHANICAL MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

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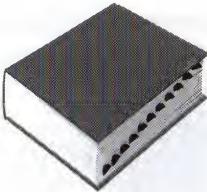
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## REVIEWS



### **Violet by Jessica Douglas-Home**

**Harvill Press: ISBN 1 86046 269 3: £20**

### **Great Virtuosi of the Harpsichord: Volume III: Violet Gordon Woodhouse Pearl GEMM CD 9242**

Some twenty years ago, I was surprised to obtain from a dealer's list an acoustic recording of the harpsichord, something that I hadn't even considered to exist, given the nature of pre-electric recordings. But I found that the faint tinkling sound not only had great charm but projected from afar a strong personality of notable poise and elegance: that was my introduction to the art of Violet Gordon Woodhouse. In the ensuing years, I acquired all her eleven HMV discs, and I even considered that they should some day be reissued, although the inherent sound problems seemed almost insurmountable.

Now we have not only her records on CD at last, but a densely packed biography, written by her great-niece, Jessica Douglas-Home. This book is subtitled *The Life and Loves of Violet Gordon Woodhouse*: while this may seem at first sight to be unnecessarily sensational, the book soon makes us realise that Violet's life was indeed ruled by two main sources of intense passion - her love of her art (which she guarded jealously and exclusively), and other people's love of her. To summarise this last aspect, it is clear that with her thick black hair and compelling black eyes she had a natural ability to engender complete worship, in both men and women. Moreover, she eventually lived in what can only be described as a *ménage à cinq*, with no less than four adoring men simultaneously, only one of whom was her

husband (and that rather nominally). This makes for a rather complicated account, as each of her 'husbands' was of different character, had a different background and career, and followed separate fortunes in the First World War. To add a further twist of the over-dramatic to Violet's life there came a strange central tragedy: her (real) husband's two sisters were both murdered in their own home.

Violet's dark exotic looks may be traced to her partly Indonesian ancestry (via a Dutch marriage): her grandfather John Gwynne built Britain's first centrifugal pump, which provided her tyrannical father with his business income. She was born on 23 April 1871, the fourth of seven surviving children, and showed a precocious talent for the piano; she was taught by her Scottish mother, who had many musical friends, including Patti (who sometimes stayed at the Gwynne country house at Folkington Place, near Eastbourne). Violet was then taught by Oscar Beringer and the eminent Spaniard Agustín Rubio; she learnt to read music only in 1887, having previously relied on her memory which was exceptional (she could reproduce on the piano any passage from Wagner).

Although she was briefly engaged in a conventional manner, the Victorian Violet found herself both "barred from a professional career" and "appalled at the prospect of a 'normal' marriage," as her biographer puts it - so what was a high-spirited genius to do? Her brother Robert's wealthy Cambridge undergraduate friend Gordon Woodhouse was not the most eligible of suitors, but he promised lifelong support devoted to her art, and they were married in 1895 (with the understanding that there would not be children). Violet made him change his surname by deed poll to Gordon Woodhouse, so that she could become Violet Gordon Woodhouse (unhyphenated) - and he officially became Gordon Gordon-Woodhouse! (She was the sort of person who make anybody do anything she needed.)

Soon she was living in a Tudor house in the country near Stratford-upon-Avon: by now her *ménage* included the Hon. Bill Barrington, Maxwell Labouchère (barrister and wit) and the dashing cavalry officer the Hon. Denis Tolle machen: Armscote House is apparently known to

this day locally as The Abode of Love! This is not the occasion to expand upon the intricacies of the domestic arrangements, but it is worth noting the difficulties engendered by dinner engagements, where an invitation to Violet in itself flouted contemporary decorum and elicited disapproval of her four men 'in tow.' Although she was extravagant on her shopping trips, Violet dressed well and was generous to her family and friends. In this book we learn of her keenness for the cinema and her collection of Horatio Nelson memorabilia, and of friendships with Delius and Beecham, and of meetings with Vaughan Williams and Cecil Sharp. Christabel Marshall, (Margaret) Radclyffe Hall and Ethel Smyth all included Violet amongst their infatuations (Hall even dedicated a book of erotic verse to her). She met, and impressed, many other famous contemporaries: Picasso, Bernard Shaw, Lawrence of Arabia and Diaghilev all visited her; the Sitwells were close friends, and Sacheverell Sitwell wrote that hearing her play the clavichord was one of the "most wonderful and inspiring musical memories" of his lifetime; she played for Bartók, Casals and Tertis; and Delius wrote a Dance for her [this appeared on a 78rpm disc, US Columbia 2095-M, played by Howard-Jones on the piano].

In 1896 Violet had attended concerts given by Arnold Dolmetsch, subsequently taking lessons from him and buying one of his harpsichords in 1899. She later bought one of his clavichords, and installed a shelf in her car to hold it (shades of Lord Berners!). After the First World War, Gordon lost his fortune and she was forced to turn professional - by this time she was celebrated for her playing of early music. She now played her beloved clavichord in public, and made her first harpsichord discs for HMV (in July 1920): these are probably not the first recordings of the harpsichord as stated in the book (and elsewhere), as there exists at least one anonymous Favorite disc which dates to perhaps early 1913. The tragic double-murder in 1926 left Violet with again enough financial support to allow her to retreat from the general public eye. The *ménage* had by now moved to Nether Lypiatt Manor in Gloucestershire, which was Violet's final home; although she broadcast several times for the BBC, sometimes on the clavichord, she made no commercial records on

this instrument. She died of cancer in her London town-flat in January 1948, and was buried back in Folkington.

Mrs Douglas-Home presents her facts in straightforward but compelling style, with the usual surmises required to fill out some of the personal feelings of the various characters. While this is often a dangerous exercise, in this case it is not only well done and believable, but is of course more than usually necessary in view of the ever-shifting pattern of Violet's close relationships with her several admirers. Because of the inevitable density of interesting information, I found the book to be sometimes rather a slow read but still well worth the effort. I found only a few oddities, such as Tivadar Nachez (the Hungarian violinist-composer) referred to as the 'Spanish' Nanchez, in connection with the conductor Fernandez Arbós (which may well have been a contemporary programme mistake). I should have liked to see a lot more footnotes, especially to pin down some of the quotations; but there is a good bibliography and an index stuffed full of famous names.

From the record-collector's point of view, a major inclusion in the book is the full discography of HMV recordings, compiled by Alan Vicat: this supersedes the listing published in the old BIRS *Recorded Sound* (41, 1971) to accompany a brief biography by Violet's nephew John Gwynne. It is a valuable adjunct to the Pearl CD which contains all VGW's published HMV discs. The very faint sound on the acoustic discs and the usual surface problems on the 1927/8 electric ones have been bravely circumnavigated by Seth B Winner, who (I would gather from the results) has probably had little experience of such early harpsichord discs. Amazingly, he has somehow ended up with what sounds like *flutter* on several tracks - is this an artefact of digital processing, or was he presented with poor cassette copies to work from? And he has gone for an 'up-front' presentation by boosting the mid-range, which has rather coarsened the whole effect: Violet's harpsichord is a good deal sweeter than appears on this CD. The producer comments on the rarity of the acoustic discs and that they are 'invariably much played when they do turn up.' I'm not sure if this is supposed to excuse the inevitable high

surface noise; but in my experience the discs tend to turn up fairly well preserved, and there is just not enough level on them to cause actual wear! The electric items sound far more like what I would expect.

Still, we can hear enough from the acoustic discs to gauge Violet's strong and flexible approach to Purcell, Scarlatti, Couperin and Rameau, Farnaby, Bull (a splendid *Galliard* in best English wistful style), Handel (the inevitable *Harmonious Blacksmith*), a wide selection of Bach, and four items recorded for Byrd's tercentenary in 1923. For good measure she recorded three English folk dances, arranged by Sharp. Her electric HMV recordings are taken up mainly by Bach's *Italian Concerto* (in strong contrast to Landowska's) and an enterprising Haydn *Sonata*. And then we come to the bonus, part of a BBC recorded programme from 1941 where she includes *Prelude and Fugue* no 1 from Book I of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*, played on the clavichord. Alas, because of space limitations, the CD does not include her astonishing reconstruction of Mendelssohn's *Midsummer Night's Dream* overture for clavichord (complete with swept strings à la Henry Cowell...). I was once lucky enough to borrow copies of the BBC discs from Violet's nephew; and so I would say that, despite the distorted sound and the rather excessive volume level on the clavichord (which is a *very* quiet instrument), the recording would be worth a more extended airing. Even the interview excerpt given here illustrates perfectly the contrast between the essentially prim Auntie BBC and Violet herself - free-ranging as ever, even in old age.

A puzzling deficiency of the book relates to its references to her several BBC broadcasts, together with a short list (Appendix III) given as "some known BBC broadcasts by Violet Gordon Woodhouse." The entries have evidently been compiled (solely?) from secondary sources such as her sister's long-running diary. Thus: "13 June 1929. Harpsichord recital at 9.35pm. Music unknown. Dorothy's diary: 'V's playing came through beautifully'." Well! Reference to the *Radio Times* for that date immediately yields simple titles and composers: *Prelude* in E flat and *Fugue* in A Minor (Bach), *Two Minuets* (Handel), *Fantaisie* No. 2 in C Minor (Mozart)

and *Two Pieces* (Domenico Scarlatti). Similar annotations may be made for some of the other broadcasts, without making a wide-ranging search for other likely broadcasts over the years. What is even stranger is that the list doesn't include the 1941 BBC recording, although the event is mentioned in the body of the book.

But for any record collector like myself 'hooked' by Britain's own answer to Landowska, the biography and the CD are a 'must.' The CD booklet includes some pictures of Violet, and is to Pearl's usual standards of presentation, with brief biographical notes by Mrs Douglas-Home and a useful appraisal by Richard Luckett of Violet's playing and her importance in the rising interest in early music, and of course full details of the recordings.

The book is well illustrated with some fine family pictures, showing Violet's stern and unforgiving father and her strange sister Dorothy, some portraits of Violet's women admirers and her male entourage, and of course Violet herself - always slightly larger than life and often decked out in fantastical garments. We are even lucky enough to have a picture of her in the HMV recording studio, showing the horn in the background and what looks suspiciously like mischievous glee on her face as she poses exotically at the harpsichord. Finally, a simple (but nevertheless pleasing) touch is the inclusion of a silk bookmark, coloured - violet. And if you're wondering about that murder, yes, it was the bu...

Peter Adamson

## THE EDISON BLUE AMBEROLS 1912-1914 by Ronald Dethlefson

After many years of being out of print with second-hand copies changing hands at a premium, Ron Dethlefson's book for the Blue Amberol collector is at last available to Society through the Booklist.

The American list cylinders covered are from the end of 1912 to the end of 1914 when Blue Amberols began to be recorded from Edison

Diamond Discs, and although probably a majority of collectors favour the later Blue Amberols with the dance tunes, those from 1912 to 1914 had a wonderful sound quality when properly reproduced. It was this series that were sold with a printed lip enclosed with details of the artist with his or her subject. Scores of these slips are reproduced in this book.

If I have criticism of this commendable work it is in the paucity of coloured illustrations showing variations in the finish of the cylinders and boxes. From two pages bound into the 1980 work, Blue Amberol cylinders and boxes are now spread on the front, back and inner flaps of the cover, but without a dating key. This information I found elsewhere in the book around pages 7 to 9. A small grumble for a most welcome book that I hope will be permanently available.

This book with a soft cover 7½" by 10", 208 pages and many black and white pictures, including Edison artists is available from the Society's Booklist at £25 plus £2.50 postage.

**George Frow**

## **Doo-Dah! Stephen Foster and The Rise of American Popular Culture** **by Ken Emerson**

Although much has already been written by Americans about one of their most famous songwriters, a full-length and thoroughly researched biography has taken a long time to appear. Ken Emerson, at one time Articles Editor of *The New York Times Magazine*, and for thirty years a writer on popular music, obviously felt it was time somebody remedied a serious omission. He approached his self-appointed task not as a musicologist but in the best traditions of investigative journalism.

The result is now in print: a big, immensely readable and praiseworthy study of a man whose true character has been clouded by excessive sentimentality, undue adulation (sometimes for commercial reasons), and unfair accusations of racialism. Emerson has stripped all the nonsense away, revealing the man as he

really was, while at the same time letting us know more about his family. In addition, Emerson provides a detailed (but not intrusive) picture of that period in their country's history in which the Fosters lived and died.

In examining many of Foster's songs, Emerson makes clear his own feelings about them. He does not seem over-impressed by the drawing room ballads, emphasizing their unrealistic romanticism. He also explored the insensitivity towards blacks which is prominent in many of Foster's best-known songs. I have to say that Emerson does tend to dwell on this aspect of Foster's song lyrics, but other writers of today seem to be equally obsessed with this admittedly unfortunate treatment by lyricists of people subjected to slavery and often dreadful ill-treatment.

Although Stephen Collins Foster emerges from the shadows, it is a great pity that Jane Denny McDowell does not. She was the woman who married him, bore him a daughter, and eventually left him, taking the child with her. This lack of substance where 'Jennie' Foster is concerned has not arisen because of inattention on Emerson's part. Little in the way of documentation seems to have survived.

Emerson's prose is not scholarly (for which we should be thankful) but in the kind of clear, forceful and easily assimilated style which makes many factual American books treasurable. I should like to have seen more illustrations in a book this size, and indeed for anyone who just enjoys a good biography, this is a must. If it has not yet been issued in a British edition, I hope it will be soon.

This book (ISBN 0-684-81010-7) is published by Simon and Schuster, Rockefeller Center, 12340 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020, at \$30.

**Peter Cliffe**

**The Talking Machine : An  
Illustrated Compendium 1877-1929  
by Timothy C. Fabrizio and George  
F. Paul. Schiffer Publishing Ltd.  
A4, 254pp.**

A bibliography of the talking machine would not be extensive, and if it included only those books aimed specifically at the collector, it would be diminutive.

Daniel Marty's *History of the Talking Machine* showed what could be done with good colour photographs, but failed to do it, let down by unreliable information, lack of attention to details such as correct fittings on machines illustrated, and by an inept English translation.

There have been a few monographs, starting with George Frow's *Guide to The Edison Cylinder Phonograph*, which showed how to do it over a quarter-of-a-century ago, and has been improved on only by the author's own later editions. No one, however, could deny that the quality of the illustrations, particularly in the latest version, leaves something to be desired.

In this new volume, we have at last a substantial work that is pleasurable to look at, being illustrated throughout with excellent colour photographs taken by the authors, and which contains a wealth of reliable information.

The book follows a logical chronological format, each chapter consisting of an introduction followed by pages of illustrations with long captions. The short introductions are at times tantalisingly so: one reaches the bottom of a page, turns over to read the expected next sentence and finds it's time for piccies.

The first chapter establishes the quality of the book straightaway, by illustrating no less than ten different tinfoil phonographs - including the recently-discovered Lambert machine which bridges the gap between tinfoil indenting and wax engraving, by engraving on a solid lead cylinder. A similar richness is noticeable in the ensuing section; where most authors would feel happy to have found one Bell-Tainter Graphophone to illustrate, the Fabrizio/Paul team shows us a dozen different versions (with

close-ups of some), in much the same way that we expect to see when reading about Edison or Victor models of the post-1897 era. What is more, the complicated early history of the industry, with its patent disputes and law-suits, is told with commendable clarity.

Tim Fabrizio has long been known as an authority on the Chicago firms who purveyed machines of mainly Columbia origin but equipped with odd-sized mandrels or spindles, and it is good to find these now expounded in the context of their mainstream competitors. For European readers, it has to be borne in mind that this is a book written from the U.S. point of view: the fierce stranglehold maintained over the disc industry by Victor and Columbia did not reach across the Atlantic, and although for a time goosenecks and taper arms were *verboten* for anything that was not a Gramophone or a Graphophone, there was no need for screw-fed arms or turntables, nor for patent volume controls that could not be mistaken for doors.

European makers are not ignored: Pathé is well represented, and there are occasional references to Gramophone/G&T variations, although the authors seem not to have noticed that the latter company, oddly, omitted the word 'Company' from its name, and I was sorry to see perpetuated the myth that Barraud painted Nipper seated on his master's coffin lid.

Spotting errors is a favourite game for reviewers, and two in a volume of this size is a pretty respectable low score. A couple of other points caught my eye, also in the context of matters G&T, drawing attention to the Atlantic divide.

A picture of a New Style No. 3 is correctly described as a late, low-cost derivative of the 1897 Improved Gramophone, but without mention of its model number. That perhaps reflects the fact that, judging by a statement on another page, the original Style No. 3 did not figure in the Berliner or Victor ranges in the States at all. Then there is the picture of a little chest-of-drawers that any G&T collector will instantly recognise as the stand for the 'Style de Luxe'. In the States, it seems, this was sold by Columbia. This really has me puzzled - it so evidently comes from the same cabinet factory as the

later single/triple-spring Monarchs, that it seems inconceivable that it could have been used by the two arch-rivals. The style, with its embossed plinth mouldings, egg-and-dart panel mouldings and rope-twist top edges, was used by Victor around 1904, but soon gave way to more classical designs. It survived in Gramophone Company catalogues until 1910.

There is no question that the difference between Victor and Gramophone Company machines (which rely on the same mechanical components in nearly all cases) adds to the interest of collecting, and a knowledge of Victor models helps to explain some of the complexities in the British range. Edison machines, by contrast, are really boringly similar the world over, and Columbia likewise saw little need to adapt to local markets, beyond changing the name. In the 1920s, however, there was more divergence, and the collector of European gramophones of that decade will find less of interest in the book.

Even more marked is the impact of the 1929 crash, which virtually put the lid on the acoustic gramophone story in the States. Over here, the Re-entrants soldiered on for a time, EMG and Expert had hardly got into their stride, and portables had another thirty years to go. This is the area in which many newcomers to the subject start their collections, of course, and they should not be put off buying this book on the grounds that it has little to say to them. It has, for it is absurd to collect one small aspect of a subject without a knowledge of the whole, even when supply and available funds may prevent a more comprehensive collecting policy. This book stands to become one of the seminal works on gramophones and phonographs, and no collector should think twice about acquiring a copy.

This book is available from the Society's Booklist at £55 plus postage.

**Christopher Proudfoot**

## C.L.P.G.S. BOOKLIST - LATEST ADDITIONS

**SINCE RECORDS BEGAN - EMI The First 100 Years** by Dr Peter Martland, our Chairman. Peter gives a most informative and readable account of the first 100 years of the disc recording industry in the United Kingdom. The book is full of illustrations from the EMI Archives, many of them shown to the general public for the first time. This is an essential buy for both the machine and record collector and is a snip at £25 plus postage.

**THE COLLECTORS' GUIDE TO HIS MASTER'S VOICE NIPPER SOUVENIRS** by Ruth Edge and Leonard Petts. A superb paperback of 1022 pages with around 2000 illustrations and pictures. An absolute must for collectors. Price £20 plus postage.

**EVA TAYLOR WITH CLARENCE WILLIAMS: EDISON LATERALS 4** - The latest Diamond Cut Productions CD (reviewed by Paul Collenette in the August 1997 issue). Price £13 plus postage.

**THE COLUMBIA PHONOGRAPH COMPANION, VOLUME II: THE COLUMBIA DISC GRAPHOPHONE AND GRAFONOLA** by Robert W. Baumbach (with data collected by Mac Lackey) is available at £20 plus postage.

**CAT No BD09: THE COMPLEAT TALKING MACHINE** (2nd Edition) by Eric L. Reiss is now available at £25 plus postage.

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## LETTERS



### Columbia Cinema Records

Dear Chris,

In answer to your request to fill in data on Keith Wallis' list of cinema records I have YBX 26 details of which are:

WAX-D74 A) *Waltz Medley* - Debroy Somers Band

WAX D76 B) *King of Jazz Selection* - Regal Cinema Orchestra

Although not in my possession, I know that one of the others is a Paul Whiteman recording, but I do not have the details.

As far as I am aware, these were taken from standard 12" Columbia issues. I have certainly found the equivalent *King of Jazz Selection* in my travels, but have kept the cinema record in preference as a 'scarce' item.

Best wishes,  
Steve Paget (age 46½)

 @gb.wf1.com

### Lopez & Kings of Harmony (1)

Dear Chris,

Many thanks for the latest *Hillendale News*. I was particularly interested in Phil Bennett's *Let's Listen Again* article. I immediately listened closely to all the Louis Hot Seven sides of May, 1927, and he's right - Baby Dodds is not audible; but as Phil says, there are cymbal crashes and even quite extended off-beat strokes on most of the sides. It is apparent that the banjo drops out just before the cymbal starts, and often resumes again for the next chorus; the two are never heard together. It looks as if Baby Dodds was unable or unwilling to be present, so Louis got Johnny St. Cyr to do the cymbal bashing as well as playing banjo - and guitar! To think jazz collectors have possessed and loved these great sides for seventy years, and never realised that things were not as they were said to be... What next -

a revelation that Bix was never on any of the Trumbauer records, that it was Andy Secrest all the time? and Emmett Hardy was on the Wolverines?

I must say I'm mystified by Phil's reference to eleven issued sides by the Lopez-Hamilton Kings of Harmony on Edison; there are eight by the Lopez Orchestra later on, but I can't find eleven by the Kings of Harmony. Details, please - and neither *Nola* nor *Wooden Soldiers* is by the quintet, but are by the full (later) Lopez orchestra, which I seem to recall reading somewhere was the Broadway Dance Orchestra (at least on some sides).

My best,  
Brian Rust, Swanage, Dorset

### Lopez & Kings of Harmony (2)

My Dear Chris,

I'm afraid Phil Bennett has been misled by an old CLPGS cylinder listing. Lopez & Hamilton's Kings of Harmony made only six titles for Edison in the spring of 1920; the listing in *Jazz Records* is correct. The other titles are by Lopez's full orchestra three years later, bootlegging for Edison whilst contracted to Okeh (which is why the majority of these latter Edison recordings were issued as Broadway Dance Orchestra).

Yours,  
Steve Walker, Stamford, Lincolnshire

### Frank Mullings

Dear Chris,

Your report in *Hillendale News* No. 216 of the talk given by Ewan Langford at the London meeting of 16th April 1997 mentioned that he played a record by Frank Mullings.

Mullings came from my home town of Walsall, Staffordshire. Many years ago I was the Chairman of the libraries, Museums and Art Gallery Committee of the borough council (the youngest member by far!). I discovered that the local history section patiently collected copies of all editions of all books written by local authors (the most famous was Jerome K. Jerome), but they had never considered collecting gramophone records of local recording artists.

I set the ball rolling by presenting them with an almost complete collection of Mullings records, together with a discography. The local paper

wrote up the story and my picture duly appeared together with that of the librarian. To the best of my knowledge, no other records were collected of any other artist, nor was the Mullings collection completed. So much for progress!!

What is the attitude of other local history departments?

Incidentally, my Grandmother told me that Mullings sang in the choir of St.Paul's Church, Walsall where he normally took the solos. She said she used to watch him in fascinated horror as his face reddened and he seemed to swell up like a frog to the point where she thought he would burst - he was plump to start with.

Best wishes,  
Bill Dean-Myatt, Sutton Coldfield,  
West Midlands

## Melody Cards (1)

Dear Chris,

The letter from Stephen Sutton in the October 1997 issue suggests that Frank Andrews' 'Birthday Wishes' label should perhaps be 'Birthday Greetings'. Well, I can confirm that they are both correct, although I would not refer to these headings as 'labels'.

Anyone familiar with my previous writings will have gathered that my collecting is somewhat eclectic and it just so happens that I possess three record birthday cards which are complete. They were produced by 'Melody Cards' of 349 Royal College Street, London N.W.1, which is printed on the back of the double card. Additional information states 'Publishers of Musical Greetings Cards' and 'Patent Pending'. The 6" diameter recording is laminated onto the front glossy page of the card and there are various decorations which are designed to be partly on the recorded surface. The reverse of this page contains a rhyme and the front of the second page contains a greeting. Although not of any great interest, I will give the details of the three records I have :

(1) MC 100 has 'Birthday Wishes' printed on the record 'label' and is titled *Rock-a-Boogie Birthday Rock*.

(2) MC 104 has 'Happy Birthday' on the label and is titled *Many Happy Returns of the Day*.

(3) MC 111 has 'Birthday Greetings' on the label and is titled *Little Perky Poodles*.

All state 'Play this card on your Record Player using Lightweight Pick-up.'

Obviously designed for children, I would have thought that a Marx toy gramophone would have been an essential item to produce maximum satisfaction from these gems.

Yours sincerely,  
Tony Voysey, Dursley, Gloucestershire

## Melody Cards (2)

Dear Chris,

Reference to *Hillendale News*, No.217 a couple of further pieces of information to broaden horizons.

Page 333, Birthday wishes. These were in fact birthday/Christmas cards 6" square with a colourful picture on the front with a transparent record on top, with the inside carrying an appropriate greeting. We know of two series, birthday MC.100-111 & Christmas MX.10-20, and possibly a third series of three. They date from around 1959 & were published by Melody Cards, 349 Royal College St., London NW.1.

Page 347-8 Bill Dean-Myatt's letter. We agree with his observations. There are still a lot of archives out there to be tapped. We have done Linguaphone's, and have lots of gaps which is why the promised book has not been forthcoming, and Bosworth's, which we need about 30 small pieces of information to complete. We have also been granted access, when time and money permit, to the archives of the English Folk Dance and Song Society in London, and those of the Industrial Welfare Society in the care of the University of Warwick, and some smaller labels; and so you see there is a need for full-time researchers sponsored by someone. We're sure that a lot of our fellow researchers could delve and publish more if they had the time. We could.

Going back to issue 215, pages 269-70, and the Treborland record player, could Bill Violen please let us have the records' matrix numbers, and secondly this appears to be identical in presentation to one we have issued for Tuck's with the record proclaiming on the label "The magic gramophone & record". The box states "A Barker talkie book made by Raphael Tuck" and is Made in England. Manufactured & published by Tuck's by arrangement with Barker Book and Toy Co., a division of Barker Greeting Card Co.,

Cincinnati 1, Ohio. Patent applied for No.739,900(23141/54).

All for now, we are,

Yours sincerely,  
Eddie and Elaine Shaw, London EC1

## Englaphone (1) and Birthday Wishes

Dear Chris,

In answer to Colin Barnard's letter on page 388 of the last issue of *Hillandale News* I can tell him that "Englaphone" was a registered trade mark for recording and reproducing talking machines. The proprietor was the Reno Trading Corporation Ltd., of 186/188 Shaftesbury Avenue, London W.C.2, who were at that address when they applied for registration on 17th September 1919. The registration was confirmed on 14th January 1920. I hear from one of our members, Roger Thorne, that machines were advertised in *The Talking Machine News* of the early 1920s.

Taking up Stephen Sutton's remarks on "Birthday Wishes" and his doubts about that this was the correct label credit, may I say, that knowing Jim Hayes and his dedication to accuracy in discographical matters, I am sure he is correct in "Birthday Wishes", but as with all birthday cards, there is no reason to doubt that the MC 100 series should not have had anniversary cards with both "Birthday Wishes" and "Birthday Greetings" in one and the same series. Can anyone extend the series?

Yours sincerely,  
Frank Andrews, Neasden, London NW10

## Englaphone (2)

Dear Chris,

Colin Barnard asks about the Englaphone (October issue, p. 388). I enclose some photo-stats of the only Englaphone advertisement I can find, from the autumn of 1919. (I have been taken to task recently for using the word 'photostat': apparently, it is old-fashioned. If so, so am I, and I shall continue to use it.)

Oddly, none of these advertisements gives a company name, but I am pretty certain I have seen it somewhere, as 'English Clocks and Gramophones', but cannot recall where. The table grand shown here does not have vertical louvres, but it does appear to have the simple type of tone-arm described by Mr. Barnard (the description underneath says it has a gooseneck, but the illustration suggests that the copy-writer was telling porkies).

The motor which Mr. Barnard cannot see (and, by the way, real gramophones don't have platters, they have turntables) is the most interesting part of an Englaphone. It is clearly based on the well-established Victor/HMV worm-drive design, but boasts, apparently, an aluminium alloy frame and spring-barrel. What was the point of that? you might ask, and I can only suggest that in the post-war world of 1919, someone had got hold of a lot of war-surplus aluminium on the cheap.

The soundbox was probably conventional, with the Englaphone name behind the mica; the Goldring Luxus is a much later replacement. I have always assumed that the Englaphone was something of a nine-day wonder; by the time they had invested in manufacturing their own motor (something that even a firm the size of Louis Sterling's Columbia never did), and splashed out on full-page ads in the 1919 trade press, there probably was not much capital left.

They also sold the Renoplex recording attachment; somehow, I get the feeling that they may not have manufactured this themselves, but it is one of the more interesting of such devices, and that I have come across only one. Mind you, I don't think I've ever seen an Englaphone.

Yours etc.,  
Christopher Proudfoot, Longfield, Kent.





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### LOCAL TREASURERS and SUBSCRIPTION PAYMENTS IN LOCAL CURRENCY:

It is vital that such members send their subscriptions to the local treasurers by 5th March 1996 so that their names can be included in the April mailing list. Those who fail to do this should send their subscriptions direct to Chris Hamilton, Hon.Treasurer C.L.P.G.S., "Ardlarich", 2 Kirklands Park, Cupar, Fife KY15 4EP, United Kingdom.

**Scandinavia:** Mr Tom Valle, [REDACTED] Oslo 10, Norway  
[REDACTED] Oslo; A/c No. [REDACTED]

Amount: 150 Norwegian Kroner

**Australia:** Mr Barry Badham, [REDACTED] Pymble, NSW 2073, Australia  
Amount: 40 Australian Dollars

**New Zealand:** Mrs Jacqueline H. Sutcliffe, [REDACTED] Upper Hutt, Nr. Wellington,  
New Zealand  
Amount: 50 New Zealand Dollars

**France:** Marc Monneraye, [REDACTED] Saint Maur, France  
Amount: 155 French Francs

Would all members please pay their subscriptions by the 5th March 1998.  
Late payments can cause a lot of extra work and expense which is reflected in the  
Society's costs and delayed delivery of the magazine to the late payers.



## REPORTS



### London Meeting, September 15th 1997

In a presentation called *The EMI Centenary - Some Myths Exploded* our Chairman, Dr Peter Martland, gave an insight into some of his investigations into the archives of the EMI Group Ltd. and its associated companies.

He said that despite stories to the contrary it appeared that W. S. Meadmore "ghost wrote" Fred Gaisberg's memoirs and that it was William Barry Owen who contracted many artists such as Caruso.

Fred Gaisberg came to London in 1898 and set up a small recording studio in the basement of The Gramophone Company's offices in Maiden Lane.

In 1904 Harry Lauder signed an exclusive contract with The Gramophone and Type-writer Ltd. We heard him singing *Roamin' in the Gloamin'*. Peter pointed that if there were few grooves left at the end of his song Lauder would often fill them in with a few remarks and laughter as he did in his stage acts.

Louisa Tetrazzini sold over 60,000 records over a period of seven years.

The year 1910 saw the banker, Louis Sterling, joined the Columbia Graphophone Company and went on to become its boss and when the merger with The Gramophone Co. Ltd. took place in 1931 to form E.M.I. Ltd. he became its Managing Director. During his time with Columbia he introduced budget labels like Phoenix, which retailed at

one shilling and one penny each. He did this to broaden the market and enable to working class people to buy records.

The slump of the early 30s saw a dramatic fall in record sales from the two companies. These fell from a peak of 30 million a year to 5 million by 1937 and they did not recover to any great extent until after the Second World War.

Peter said that it was generally thought that Joseph Batten was the recording engineer at the sessions at Bayreuth. However it was Arthur H. Brooks who was the recording engineer. Before one of these sessions at Bayreuth it was discovered that the recording blanks had been sent to Beirut by mistake!

All this and many more interesting facts and pictures can be found in Peter's excellent book. Thank you very much indeed Peter for such an informative and enjoyable evening.

**Geoff Edwards**

### Midlands Group Meeting, September 20th 1997

As the planned speaker was unable to attend due to work commitments Phil Bennett filled the gap in the first part of the evening and much to our surprise abandoned his beloved jazz and gave us a presentation called *A Jazz Man Looks at the Classics*.

Phil explained that his parents came from a classical background. His mother was an accomplished pianist, violinist and guitarist. His father took him to many classical concerts at Wolverhampton's Civic Hall, where he saw Gigli, Sir Adrian Boult, Sir Thomas Beecham and Sir Malcolm Sargent amongst others.

Phil played us a couple of arias by Caruso, and one by Gigli (*M'Appari* from Flotow's *Marta*). Phil explained that the Bennett household preferred Gigli to Caruso.

Phil has a leaning towards English composers such as Elgar, Delius and Walton. We heard a 1929 recording of Elgar's *Rose Marie* and then Elgar conducting the LSO in *Pomp and Circumstance March No.1*, recorded in 1931. This was filmed and recorded by Pathé at the inauguration of EMI's Abbey Road Studios.

Another love of Phil's is the works of Gilbert and Sullivan and we heard three songs from *HMS Pinafore*, *Pirates of Penzance* and *Trial by Jury* featuring Henry Lytton, Peter Pratt and John Reid.

After playing Vaughan Williams' *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis*, Phil concluded with a guitar duet performed by Julian Bream and John Williams (*Pavane pour une infante défunte* by Ravel).

After such an impressive programme we saw Phil in a new light.

After the break Eddie Dunn gave us an enjoyable programme on LP and tape of comedians from film, theatre and radio.

Eddie is well known for his interest in opera and vocal music but is not so well known for his interest in comedy. In a well-prepared and researched programme Eddie shared his love of comedy with us. We heard comic patter by Frankie Howerd, Robb Wilton and Kenneth Williams.

Songs by Joan Turner (a good singer who chose the comic style) and the infamous Florence Foster Jenkins (who actually believed she could sing, but to put it mildly, could not).

The Two Ronnies gave us their routine from their TV programmes and we heard Benny Hill with his hilarious *The Birds and the Bees*.

The American side of comedy was illustrated with *The Temperance Lecture* by W. C. Fields, Kogar Berson and Don Amiche, and Johnny Standley's *It's in the Book*. The final rendering was *The Great Pretender* with the inimitable Stan Freberg.

Many thanks to both presenters for their hard work in preparing and presenting their programmes.

**Geoff Howl**

### **Midlands Group Fair, September 27th 1997**

This was held once more in St.Matthew's Church Hall, East Park Way, Wolverhampton. Fewer stalls were taken up this year due to illness and one stall holder sleeping in! However the variety of gramophonalia on sale was as wide as ever.

Machines of all descriptions, hundreds of cylinders, books and catalogues were in evidence as well as thousands of 78s of all types. There was something for everyone.

About the same number of people supported as last year and were glad to extend a special welcome to Bess and George Frow, Frank Andrews and various members of the Northern Group. We are always pleased that such a long-distance effort is made and more members should try to make it to our friendly get-together.

Bacon butties and other eats and drinks were provided by our ladies and the quality was as good as ever.

**Geoff Howl**

### **REGIONAL GROUP SECRETARIES**

#### **Clockwork Music Group**

H. P. Bailey, [REDACTED]  
Tyne and Wear NE16 4ES

#### **Midlands Group**

Phil Bennett, [REDACTED] Whitmore Reans,  
Wolverhampton WV6 0JW, Tel: [REDACTED]

#### **Northern Group**

Ann Mallinson, [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] Barrow, Cumbria LA13 0HO  
Tel: [REDACTED]

#### **West of England Group**

Paul Morris, [REDACTED] Exeter,  
Devon EX4 4HE, Tel: [REDACTED]

## **Northern Group, September 14th 1997**

On Sunday 14th September, 22 Members of the Northern Group attended Alston Hall for their "Magnificent Talking Machine" event where the topic was "Care and Maintenance of Machines and Records".

Important areas such as removal, cleaning and replacement of main springs, with the inherent dangers, were discussed and demonstrated. Members were invited to try it for themselves - balancing, replacement of springs, adjustment and meshing of governors with wormwheels, was also demonstrated as was the "setting-up", re-gasketing and adjustment of soundboxes. The manufacture of drive belts for Phonographs was discussed and demonstrated.

Cabinet repair techniques - including cleaning, filling of damage, varnishing and french polishing was also included.

The cleaning of records brought about lively discussion, with one particularly worn specimen being waxed and then played. A beeswax spray available under the name "Wilco" was mentioned as being superior to the "Pledge" demonstrated at the meeting.

Whilst the assemblies were in progress the Members were entertained by "Northern Comics" such as Walter Greenhalgh (Owd Shuttleworth), Tommy Handley, Norman Evans, Charley Higgins; and to finish on a really classical note (for the Opera 'buffs' present) - George Formby (Sen.) performed his *Funicula* - all these on a Zonophone Champion belonging to Miles Mallinson.

This was the first meeting at which a "Swaps" Table was available to the obvious enjoyment of the Members.

The usual Afternoon Teas and general socializing brought this unusual Meeting to a close.

**Ann Mallinson**

## **FORTHCOMING MEETINGS IN LONDON**

The London Meetings are held in the **Parlour Room** at the **Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church Halls**, 235 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2H 8EL at 7pm on the third Tuesday of the month.

**December 16th** *Members' Night* - Traditional light-hearted seasonal programme.

**January 20th 1998** Barry Raynaud will give the final part of his paper *Sound Recording and Reproduction of the 78rpm Era (1927-1960)*.

## **CHANGE OF VENUE**

Due to reconstruction work at the Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church we shall be meeting in the **Wynter Room** at the **Swedenborg Society, Swedenborg House, 20-21 Bloomsbury Way, London WC1A 2TH** during the months of February, March, April, May and June 1998.

**February 17th** Anthony Pollard, Chairman of Gramophone Publications Ltd., will talk on *75 Years of Gramophone*.

**March 17th** Chris Hamilton will give us *Another Taste of Scotland*.

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